

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION SS-25

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R 101115Z APR 76
FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8083

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TANANARIVE 0591

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, MA
SUBJECT: CHARGE'S CALL ON PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA APRIL 10

REF: (A) STATE 86687, (B) TANANARIVE 0462

1. DURING MY FIRST CALL ON PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA SINCE MY ARRIVAL, HE WAS FROM THE OUTSET A LISTENER MORE THAN A PROTAGONIST. I COVERED A VARIETY OF SUBJECTS, PAUSING FREQUENTLY TO SEE IF HE HAD ANY THOUGHTS TO CONVEY, BUT HE APPEARED TO REACT DEFENSIVELY TO THOSE THINGS THAT I SAID ON WHICH HE CHOSE TO COMMENT. THE ONLY TWO SUBJECTS WHICH HE INITIATED IN THE DISCUSSION (NASA BASE AND NEW US AMBASSADOR) WERE INCLUDED IN DISCUSSION OF OTHER SUBJECTS.

2. TAKING NOTE OF THIS BICENTENNIAL YEAR, I RECALLED THAT US POLICY HAS ALWAYS BEEN SELF-DETERMINATION FOR ALL PEOPLES INCLUDING PEOPLES OF SOUTHERN AFRICA. I GAVE HIM TRANSLATIONS OF SECRETARY KISSINGER'S STATEMENT BEFORE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES OF MARCH 4, 16 AND 29, ADDING THAT I WANTED TO BE SURE RATSIRAKA HAD CLEAR PICTURE OF US ATTITUDE IN VIEW OF DISTORTIONS IN LOCAL MEDIA. WE DISCUSSED STATE OF MALAGASY MEDIA, RATSIRAKA CLAIMING THAT EVEN THOUGH WE DO NOT HAVE US NEWS AGENCIES PRESENT IN MADAGASCAR, US POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES ARE SUFFICIENTLY REPORTED IN THE PRESS ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. I REFUTED HIS STATEMENT, POINTING OUT THAT, AT LEAST SINCE I HAVE BEEN HERE (MID-NOVEMBER 1975), WE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO PLACE ANY
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WIRELESS FILE MATERIAL IN THE LOCAL PRESS, THE WIRELESS

FILE BEING IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT PROVIDES OFFICIAL US PUBLIC STATEMENTS. CONTENDING THAT WE PAY MALAGASY JOURNALISTS TO FAVOR THE US IN VARIOUS STORIES, I ASSURED HIM THAT THIS WAS NOT AT ALL THE CASE.

3. REFERRING TO THE UN AND OTHER MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATIONS, I SAID THAT THE GAP IN UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE US AND MADAGASCAR, AS REPRESENTATIVE OF SOME THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES, SEEMS TO BE THAT THE LATTER GET INVOLVED IN SUBJECTS OF VERY LITTLE INTEREST TO THEM BUT OF GREAT RELEVANCE TO US. CONSEQUENTLY, THEY VOTE BY BLOC, FREQUENTLY WITHOUT REGARD TO THE FACTS OF THE CASE. IN RESPONSE, RATSIRAKA NOTED THAT BLOC-VOTING WAS AN ELEMENT INTRODUCED BY THE WESTERN COUNTRIES WHEN THE UN WAS FIRST FORMED IN 1945 AND THAT TIMES HAVE CHANGED. I SAID THAT WHAT HAD REALLY CHANGED WAS NOT THE NATURE OF THE BLOCS BUT THAT VOTING WITHIN THE UN USED TO BE BASED ON THE FACTS OF THE ISSUE RATHER THAN THE BLOCS, AND THAT IN THE UN'S EARLY DAYS THE POINTS OF VIEW OF THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES WERE QUITE DIFFERENT FROM WHAT THEY ARE NOW. I ADDED THAT WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT IT IS WITHIN THE SPIRIT OF THE UN CHARTER FOR COUNTRIES TO IGNORE THE FACTS OF ANY CASE IN ORDER TO PROMOTE THE POLITICAL OBJECTIVES OF ONE OR MORE AGGRESSIVE COUNTRIES.

4. I TOOK NOTE OF RATSIRAKA'S MARCH 19 PRESS CONFERENCE (REF B) DURING WHICH HE STATED THAT SOCIALIST COUNTRIES (UNSPECIFIED) WERE GOING TO DELIVER VARIOUS TYPES OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT (ALSO UNSPECIFIED) TO MADAGASCAR. I SAID THAT WE, THE US, WOULD BE DISMAYED TO SEE IF THIS DEVELOPMENT LEADS TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MILITARY ADVISORY TEAMS OR BASES IN THIS COUNTRY. RATSIRAKA ROSE TO THE OCCASION AND EMPHATICALLY SAID THAT THERE WILL BE NO BASES IN THE COUNTRY (HE DID NOT REFER TO ADVISORS) AND THAT HE HAS ALREADY REFUSED REQUESTS FROM THE SOVIETS, THE IRANIANS, AND THE JAPANESE FOR NAVAL PORT CALLS. HE ADDED THAT THE FRENCH HAD ALSO SOUGHT TO BRING IN A LARGE NAVAL VESSEL BUT HE WOULD NOT AGREE TO THAT VISIT. (WE HAVE LEARNED IN THE LAST FEW DAYS THAT A FRENCH FREGATE WILL BE PAYING A CALL AT DIEGO SUAREZ SOMETIME IN MAY, FIRST FOREIGN NAVAL VESSEL TO VISIT MADAGASCAR SINCE RATSIRAKA TOOK

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OFFICE IN JUNE 1975.) HE ALSO MENTIONED THAT HE HAD FIRST SOUGHT TO OBTAIN TWO HELICOPTERS FROM THE FRENCH, ONE AS A GIFT, BUT THE FRENCH NEVER REPLIED.

5. I SAID THAT WE COULD NOT OPPOSE RATSIRAKA'S "TOUS AZIMUTHS" POLICY BUT WE WOULD REMAIN ALERT TO THESE DEVELOPMENTS. AT THAT POINT, RATSIRAKA SAID THAT WE ARE JUST LIKE THE CHINESE WHO COME IN ON OCCASION TO COMPLAIN

ABOUT THE SOVIETS AND THEIR PRIVILEGED STANDING IN MADAGASCAR. RATSIRAKA THEN REITERATED THAT MADAGASCAR'S POLICY REMAINS ONE OF "TOUS AZIMUTHS." HE WENT ON TO POINT OUT THAT US INTERESTS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN DO NOT RESPECT MADAGASCAR'S PLAN FOR INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE. HE CLAIMED THAT WE HAVE INCREASED US FORCES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN, PARTICULARLY THE BASE AT DIEGO GARCIA WHICH MUST BE VIEWED, ALONG WITH THE OTHER WESTERN BASES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AREA, AS FAR OUTWEIGHING THE SOVIET BASES AT BERBERA AND MAURITIUS. HE NOTED THAT WE HAVE AIRCRAFT CARRIERS, WHEREAS THE SOVIETS HAVE NONE, AND THAT WE HAVE MISSILES RINGING THE USSR, WHEREAS THE SOVIETS DO NOT HAVE MISSILES SURROUNDING THE US. I POINTED OUT THAT THE COLD WAR BEGAN AFTER THE WESTERN WORLD HAD SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCED ITS MILITARY FORCES, WHEREAS THE SOVIETS HAD CONTINUED TO BUILD. RATSIRAKA, SHRUGGING HIS SHOULDERS, SAID THAT AT LEAST IN THE INDIAN OCEAN THE BALANCE IS MUCH STRONGER ON THE WESTERN SIDE.

6. RATSIRAKA NOTED THAT WE HAD NOT YET NAMED A NEW AMBASSADOR (CONCERNING WHICH I WAS NON-COMMITTAL) AND SAID THAT US ATTITUDE WAS ONE OF "TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT." MADAGASCAR HAD BEEN READY TO ASSIGN A NEW AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON AND HE WOULD HAVE AGREED TO ALMOST ANY NEW US CANDIDATE, BUT IT WAS THE US WHICH CHOSE TO SUSPEND THE SUBJECT. I REPLIED THAT THE HOST COUNTRY HAS EVERY RIGHT TO REJECT AN AMBASSADORIAL NOMINEE. HOWEVER, ALTHOUGH WE DID NOT CONSIDER THE REASON TO BE SATISFACTORY, THE OVERALL STATE OF US-MADAGASCAR RELATIONS MUST BE THE MAJOR CONSIDERATION IN VIEWING OUR ATTITUDE ON THIS SUBJECT.

7. RATSIRAKA THEN BROACHED THE QUESTION OF THE NASA BASE, SAYING THAT THE US SPENDS SO MANY MILLIONS OF DOLLARS

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IN PAYING FOR TRACKING STATIONS AND MILITARY BASES SUCH AS DIEGO GARCIA, AND YET WAS NOT WILLING TO PAY THE RENT FOR WHICH THERE WAS CLEAR PROVISION IN THE 1963 AGREEMENT. HE SAID THAT SINCE US HAD OFFERED IN 1973 TO PAY \$100,000 PER YEAR, THE US HAD THEREBY ACCEPTED THE PRINCIPLE OF RENT AND THE QUESTION, THEREFORE, WAS ONLY ONE OF AMOUNT.

8. I RESPONDED THAT AS FAR AS I AM AWARE THE USG DOES NOT ACCEPT PRINCIPLE THAT BACK RENT IS DUE ALTHOUGH WE OFFERED TO PAY FOR YEARS 1973 ON. I POINTED OUT THAT VALUE TO THE US OF NASA EQUIPMENT WAS DIMINISHING RAPIDLY AND HE MUST BE AWARE THAT NASA WILL NEVER RETURN TO THE STATION. HE ACKNOWLEDGED BOTH POINTS AND ADDED THAT THE BALL IS IN THE US COURT IF WE, DESPITE OUR PROCLAIMED POSITION (DIPLOMATIC NOTE SENT LAST DECEMBER), WISH TO RESOLVE THE

ISSUE. I NOTED THAT WE HAVE NOT YET RECEIVED REPLY TO OUR
DECEMBER NOTE.

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R 101115Z APR 76
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8084

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TANANARIVE 0591

EXDIS

9. IN CLOSING, RATSIRAKA SAID THAT THERE WAS NO REASON WHY WE COULD NOT CONTINUE THIS DIALOGUE OVER THE COURSE OF TIME BUT ADMONISHED ME THAT US MUST BETTER UNDERSTAND POSITION OF A POOR, THIRD WORLD COUNTRY WHICH IS STRIVING FOR ITS EXISTENCE AND HAS ONLY ITS DIGNITY AS ITS GREATEST ASSET. I REPLIED THAT WE RESPECTED MADAGASCAR'S VIEWS AND ITS PLACE IN THE WORLD, MADAGASCAR'S CHANGED VIEW OF THE WORLD IN THE LAST FEW YEARS, AND THE IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US. NONETHELESS, I CONCLUDED, I WOULD LOOK FORWARD TO ASSURING MYSELF THAT HE IS FULLY AND CAREFULLY AWARE OF OUR POLICIES AND THE REASONS FOR OUR ACTIONS. HE RESPONDED BY SAYING THAT HIS DOOR IS ALWAYS OPEN.

10. COMMENT: RATSIRAKA, NOT THE MOST RELAXED OF MEN, WAS LESS CONTENTIOUS THAN I EXPECTED HIM TO BE. HE DID NOT SEEM TO BE INTERESTED IN OPENING THE WAY FOR IMPROVEMENT IN OUR RELATIONS, NOR DID HE GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT HE WANTED TO BE ANTAGONISTIC TO THE US. BY GRANTING THE AUDIENCE, HE APPARENTLY WANTED TO GIVE CREDENCE TO "TOUS AZIMUTHS" POLICY, BUT SINCE THERE WAS NO PRESS COVERAGE (UNLIKE ALL OTHER DIPLOMATIC AUDIENCES HE AND HIS MINISTERS HAVE), THERE WILL BE NO PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE OF THE MEETING. MOREOVER, HE DID NOT GIVE ONE INDICATION OF ANYTHING HE WOULD LIKE TO OBTAIN FROM US. ONE CAN ONLY CONCLUDE THAT THIS 50-MINUTE SESSION WAS, FROM HIS POINT OF VIEW, AN

OBLIGATION WHICH HE HAD TO FULFILL.SHEINBAUM

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